

Laurel House Expert Advisory Panel for Youth (LEAPY)

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference provide the scope and purpose of LEAPY. The current LEAPY members have been involved in the review on multiple occasions during their tenure. Following the recruitment of new members, there will be an opportunity to review the Terms of Reference. Following this, Terms of Reference should be reviewed at least annually and approved by the LEAPY members.

AIMS OF LEAPY

Laurel House has recognised the importance of engaging with children and young people as experts on their own lives and experiences. Understanding children and young people's experiences of sexual violence and the factors that lead to better and to poorer outcomes is critical to developing better policies and practices.

Children and young people who have experienced sexual violence are in a unique position to be able to reflect on their experiences and offer valuable insights into service delivery and system reform. The **primary aim** of LEAPY is to empower children and young people in Tasmania to use their lived experience of sexual violence to inform and enhance service delivery, support provision, primary prevention, policy and legislation both within the organisation and to external specialist services, community organisations and government agencies. This will be leveraged using a youth engagement and participation model by training, supporting and empowering children and young people to advocate using their unique and diverse voices and lived experience.

ROLE OF LEAPY

1. A platform to share insights on their preferred models of support, and how to effectively prevent and respond to sexual violence in their communities.
2. Opportunities to provide feedback on existing materials, campaigns, and programs as to how they can best reflect the lived experience of children and young people.
3. Engaging with and providing updates to the Board on key priorities for children and young people and preferred practice and support for sexual violence.
4. Providing advice and support to external specialist, community organisations, government stakeholders and other organisations as required

The following suggestions have been recommended to provide an overarching supportive environment for participants and their families with the key intent of ensuring that their participation does not re-victimise or traumatise them further.

FRAMEWORKS, GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

The work of LEAPY is informed by the following framework, guidelines, policies and legislation to ensure the safety and rights of children and young people who are victim-survivors are upheld at all times:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Childⁱ specifically article 3, 12, 13, 15, 19, 31, 34, 39.
- Experts by Experience Frameworkⁱⁱ, which enhances the ability of services to provide opportunities for victim-survivor advocates to influence policy development, service planning and practice by using best practice engagement.
- The Y-Change Project pilot evaluation reportⁱⁱⁱ which acknowledges young people are the experts of their own experiences and that not only services, but society as a whole benefits when young people are active, empowered participants.
- Cahill (2016) Framework for Planning Child and Youth Participation^{iv}
- Child Safety and Wellbeing Framework^v
- National Principles for Child Safe Organisations^{vi}
- Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV)^{vii}
- Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1997 (Tas)^{viii}
- Our Watch Voices for Change Implementation Guide^{ix}
- Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence against Women and Girls^x
- An Australian Framework for the ethical co-production of research with victim survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence^{xi}
- Laurel House policies, especially Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy, Continuous Quality Improvement Policy, Code of Conduct and Privacy and Confidentiality policy.

The work of LEAPY will incorporate a youth development model, trauma-informed practice, a strengths-based approach, empowerment model and healing practice with a focus on cultivating an environment of trust and transparency. This enables working truly collaboratively with young people to support them in recognising and utilising their strengths and social assets to enact change.

- Youth development model enabling children and young people to engage in processes such as teamwork and decision-making that are applicable to broader life.
- Trauma-informed practice ensures that the risk of harm, traumatisation or re-traumatisation by engaging in LEAPY is minimised.
- A strengths-based approach highlights that even in contexts of adversity, children and young people demonstrate significant strength.

- A healing practice and empowerment model ensures that children and young people can gain a sense of restoration of power and control in their journey of recovery from sexual violence by influencing how services respond to their needs and by working to bring change to the systems that create, enable or condone sexual violence against them.



Image source: Experts by Experience framework

AGE RANGE

The members of LEAPY will ideally be children and young people aged 13 – 18 years who live in the north and north west of Tasmania. Younger children are not prevented from applying but careful consideration to the appropriateness of this would be part of an individual assessment process. Additionally, to compliment this work Laurel House’s Youth Engagement Lead may consider hosting workshops (or other forms of engagement) with children and their caregivers, to engage younger demographics in conversations, including what makes them feel safe at home, school and in public.

CONSENT & PERMISSION

While LEAPY will centre on empowering children and young people, due to the potential impact of participating in an advisory council, it is strongly encouraged that caregivers or guardians provide their consent and commitment to their child’s participation. However, if the child was identified as Gillick competent then permission from a caregiver would not need to be provided. A consent form will be provided for all members to complete before the first meeting.

Laurel House is also committed to working with parent/caregivers to ensure they are across themes discussed and feel supported and skilled to manage any conversations or behavioural changes that may result as part of their child’s participation.

ENGAGING WITH (NON-ABUSIVE) PARENTS/CAREGIVERS

To ensure the LEAPY member feels safe to contribute, supported in their ongoing recovery, and empowered to provide feedback about their engagement with LEAPY, it is key that Laurel House engages with the parents/caregivers of children and young people who are members of LEAPY. This may include:

- Regular de-briefing sessions following LEAPY meetings

- Ad-hoc feedback from guardians or caregivers via phone, email or anonymously through a survey
- Referrals to specialist support programs
- Workshops for parents/caregivers
- Co-joined sessions with young people and their caregivers

ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Laurel House is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to creating an inclusive and diverse environment in all of our services and projects. Laurel House recognises that diversity adds to the strengths of our projects.

It is intended that LEAPY will reflect the diversity of children and young people across all demographics including, but not limited to class, geographical location, ethnicity, cultural background, sex, gender, sexuality or disability.

Making LEAPY and associated activities accessible and inclusive is a key priority to provide a safe and inclusive environment for lived experience advocates. Laurel House will work to ensure any reasonable adjustments can be arranged for LEAPY members and will revisit accessibility of the program with members throughout. Any documentation will be shared in plain English and where needed child friendly or easy English versions will be developed.

SUPPORT & DEBRIEFING

It is key that LEAPY members and their families are connected with appropriate support. This will include regular debriefing, and Laurel House counsellors will be available at the end of sessions to allow for reflections and provide additional support. If the LEAPY member is not a current client of Laurel House, the Youth Engagement Lead will liaise with our Senior Counsellors and people involved with supporting that young person about the best way to support the member during their time with LEAPY.

LEAPY members also have access to the 24/7 support line at 1800697877

If there are additional therapeutic needs identified, then this can be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the duration of LEAPY, Laurel House will offer a range of professional development opportunities for LEAPY members. This would be determined in consultation with the members and may include:

- Understanding Trauma
- Telling your story and turning it into advocacy
- Problem solving
- Public speaking
- Art based workshops
- Self-care while advocating

- Other fun or team-building activities

All exercises should be centred on providing agency to members and being respectful of their bodily integrity and boundaries.

CONVENOR/CHAIR

Meetings are convened by the CEO of Laurel House, Kathryn Fordyce. From 2024 there will be a Co-Chair of LEAPY nominated by the membership. The Co-Chair will share responsibility for chairing the meeting with the CEO, and will have the support from the Youth Engagement Lead, Laurel House. The role of co-chair will be rotational every year or more frequently if determined by the group.

LEAPY COMPOSITION AND TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

LEAPY will be comprised of:

- Up to 15 victim-survivors identified through an expression of interest and interview process

Each member will hold a two-year term. Extensions of terms will be possible to support continuity of the group.

The following Laurel House staff members will be ex-officio members of the group:

- CEO, Laurel House, Kathryn Fordyce
- Youth Engagement Lead, Laurel House, Keelie McMahon

Laurel House Counselling staff will attend meetings as supporters but they are not part of LEAPY.

Additionally, other people may be invited to participate in LEAPY meetings including other members of the Laurel House team, including policy officers (Tess Moodie and Emma Smith) or members of the Laurel House Leadership Team or Board. Other specialists may be invited as guests as required

TERM, MEETING FREQUENCY AND PROCESSES

- The term of the group will be 2 years with continuation of membership to be reviewed at the end of the term.
- The Chair will propose a yearly schedule of meeting dates, with approximately 12 meetings per year. LEAPY will meet as per the meeting schedule, or as required.
- There may be instances where out-of-sequence meeting or out-of-session decision are required, where possible at least two weeks' notice will be provided.
- The following principles for the conduct of meetings will act as a starting point:
 - Decisions are to be made by consensus.
 - Meetings will be conducted using a hybrid approach that allows for in person and online attendance that will allow all members to participate in

a way that feels comfortable. Engagement through meetings can occur via online chat, or use of programs like Slido to seek feedback and agreement with all members of LEAPY.

- Visual arts will also be utilised, where appropriate, to support discussion topics.

If there are any further means of engagement between LEAPY, then this will be agreed by LEAPY during the first meeting.

MEETING AGENDAS

Meeting agendas and papers are a critical tool in supporting all LEAPY members to prepare for the meeting. As such, Laurel House will ensure that:

- All of the LEAPY meeting agendas must include suggestions from LEAPY members, with exception of the inaugural meeting. Suggested agenda items/discussion subjects will be called for in advance of the meeting and during the meeting, and suggestions can be made to the Youth Engagement Lead.
- The LEAPY meeting agenda, with attached meeting papers will be distributed at least five (5) working days prior to the next scheduled meeting
- Issues can be considered out of session if agreed by LEAPY
- Where disagreement regarding an out-of-session issue arises, the Chair will determine an appropriate course of action to resolve the issue
- Updates will be provided at subsequent meetings on the progress of recommendations, including key actions and their impact.

MEETING RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Laurel House will work to ensure that LEAPY has clear outlines for meetings. This will include setting with members clear rules and responsibilities, including:

- Meetings are safe spaces for all LEAPY members, Laurel House staff and support people. Please respect the privacy of all members, do not share their story to others. If you have mutual friends, you may not tell them that you're involved in LEAPY together.
- This is a space where everyone is to be treated with dignity and respect. Everyone should have the opportunity to feel heard, believed and supported through their engagement with LEAPY.
- Be aware that everyone has different experiences, opinions and trauma sensitivities. To minimise triggering to members we ask that all members do not disclose explicit detail of their experiences in a way that may cause harm to others.
- All of our meetings will finish on time to be respectful of everyone's time and engagement.
- A Laurel House counsellor will be available after the end of the meeting for conversations; however, the Youth Engagement Lead will also conduct a follow up as agreed with each member to ensure they have time and space to debrief.

These rules will be reviewed annually by LEAPY.

PRE AND POST MEETING CHECK-INS

The Youth Engagement Lead will share the meeting agenda in advance and arrange a 10 – 15 minute phone call with each member to check in, give them an opportunity to raise any concerns, or themes that they would prefer not to be involved in or would like to talk through in advance.

The Youth Engagement Lead will also conduct a follow up call with each member a few days after each meeting to check in and receive feedback about the meeting. This is also a helpful time to raise things that may have come up for each member after the session.

Laurel House will also invite family and caregivers to attend an optional debriefing session to talk through any reflections or concerns about their child's participation in LEAPY.

SUPPORT PEOPLE AND MEETINGS

To allow for the attendance of a diverse range of young people, members of LEAPY are permitted to have a support person involved in the meeting. To ensure that the involvement of a support person can be accommodated:

- notification must be provided to the Chair at least two business days before the meeting if a support person is required.
- The support members will be subject to a confidentiality agreement and clear protocols will apply to their involvement in meetings. (See protocol for the Youth Engagement Lead Advisory Engagement and Support People).

QUORUM

- A minimum of four (4) LEAPY members or delegated proxies are required for the meeting to be recognised as an authorised meeting for the recommendations or resolutions to be valid.
- If the quorum is not available, then decision making outside of the meeting by way of informal meetings may be held with members individually.

LEAVING LEAPY

Members who wish to leave LEAPY before the end of their term are asked to let the Youth Engagement Lead know either by email, phone or SMS providing notice where possible.

HONORARIUM

All members of LEAPY would receive an honorarium of \$30 per hour for their involvement. LEAPY Members will receive the honorarium for preparation time, meeting attendance, check-ins and debriefing. Some other unpaid opportunities to advocate and engage with stakeholders outside of the formal work of LEAPY. Where the honorarium payment is offered to LEAPY members and where it is not will be clearly communicated to members.

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- ⁱ [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child \(UNCRC\) \(unicef.org.au\)](https://www.unicef.org/au)
- ⁱⁱ [The Family Violence Experts by Experience Framework | Safe and Equal](#)
- ⁱⁱⁱ [The Y-Change Pilot Project Evaluation | Berry Street](#)
- ^{iv} <https://www.berrystreet.org.au/uploads/publicResources/The-Y-Change-Project-Evaluation.pdf>
- ^v <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/publications/child-safety-and-wellbeing-framework>
- ^{vi} <https://childsafeforhumanrights.gov.au/national-principles>
- ^{vii} <https://www.nasasv.org.au/resources>
- ^{viii} <https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1997-028>
- ^{ix} <https://whe.org.au/what-we-do/prevention-of-violence-against-women/>
- ^x <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/12/safe-consultations-with-survivors-of-violence-against-women-and-girls>
- ^{xi} <https://www.saferfamilies.org.au/codesignframework>